

HON GERRY BROWNLEE, MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Review of the Iraq Deployment

March 2016

This publication provides information on Cabinet's 21 March 2016 review of New Zealand's military deployment to Iraq and notes that, in light of the success of the Building Partners Capacity mission, New Zealand's contribution will continue for the full mandate until May 2017.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- The Cabinet minute of decision: *Review of the Iraq Deployment* [CAB-16-MIN-0112]
- The Cabinet paper: *Review of the Iraq Deployment* [CAB-16-SUB-0112]

This pack has been released on the Ministry of Defence website, available at: www.defence.govt.nz/publications.

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Information is withheld where making it available would be likely to prejudice:

- the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand [section 6(a)]
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on the basis of confidence by the Government of any other country [section 6(b)(i)].



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Review of the Iraq Deployment

Portfolios **Defence / Foreign Affairs**

On 21 March 2016, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that:
 - 1.1 in February 2015, Cabinet agreed that New Zealand make a contribution to a joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission in Taji, Iraq, until May 2017 [CAB Min (15) 5/8];
 - 1.2 the Building Partner Capacity mission is performing well and is achieving the agreed objectives;
- 2 **noted** that, in light of this success, New Zealand's contribution to the Building Partner Capacity mission will continue for the full mandate until May 2017;
- 3 **noted** that the mission continues to provide a positive contribution towards the objectives of reducing the global threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as Daesh (ISIL/Daesh) in keeping with New Zealand's size and capacity;
- 4 **noted** that the unmitigated operational threat to New Zealand Defence Force personnel and platforms deployed to Iraq remains HIGH;
- 5 **noted** that, despite some losses on the battlefield, ISIL/Daesh and its affiliate groups remain a real and significant threat to international peace and security, including to New Zealand and New Zealand interests;
- 6 **noted** that the Minister of Defence has received a letter from the United States Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, requesting that New Zealand consider expanding its contribution to the counter-ISIL/Daesh coalition;
- 7 **noted** that the estimated cost of the Iraq deployment is within the current Cabinet approvals.

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Cabinet,

REVIEW OF THE IRAQ DEPLOYMENT

Proposal

1. This paper reviews New Zealand's military deployment to Iraq and confirms that the objectives of the Building Partner Capacity mission are being achieved.

Executive summary

2. In response to a request from the Government of Iraq, Cabinet agreed in February 2015 to commit New Zealand forces to the international coalition to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) also known as Daesh. This decision recognised the multi-dimensional threat that ISIL/Daesh posed to international peace and security, including to New Zealand and New Zealand's interests.

3. New Zealand's most substantial contribution to the international coalition to counter ISIL/Daesh, from here on in referred to as 'the coalition', is to the joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission in Taji, Iraq (map at **Annex One** refers). The purpose of this mission is to train the Iraqi Army to prepare them for operations against ISIL/Daesh.

4. To date, the Australia and New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission, known as Task Group Taji, has trained over 4000 Iraqi Army personnel and conducted three junior leadership courses. Reporting indicates that, after the initial nine months of the Building Partner Capacity mission, the training is having a tangible and positive impact on the ability of the Iraqi Army units to take the fight to ISIL/Daesh. s.6(b)(i)

overall, units trained by the coalition Building Partner Capacity missions are performing better than those that have not been through the training programme.

5. In addition to coalition reporting, the New Zealand Defence Force has been assessing the performance of our contribution to Task Group Taji on a monthly basis. The findings from the monthly assessments have been positive and confirm that the intent of the mission is being met. On this basis, the deployment should continue until May 2017.

6. Due in part to the increased capability of Iraqi forces and the air support provided by coalition partners, there have been some recent successes in the military campaign against ISIL/Daesh with the group losing approximately 40 percent of its territory in Iraq. That said, ISIL/Daesh still maintains its strongholds in Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq and the counter-offensives to re-take these, and other areas, will likely be a protracted and complex process.

7. Despite some tactical losses on the battlefield, ISIL/Daesh continues to pose a significant threat to broader international peace and stability. In particular, recent events in Paris and Jakarta have highlighted ISIL/Daesh's ability to use its network of affiliates to strike at civilians well beyond its territory.

8. ISIL/Daesh's demonstrated ability and intention to strike beyond its territory has led to a consequent reinvigoration of counter-ISIL/Daesh efforts by our partners and the international community. This has included the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2249 on countering terrorism, which provides political and legal support to military operations to combat ISIL/Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Subsequently, the United States Secretary of Defence Ash Carter wrote to coalition partners, including New Zealand, requesting additional contributions to enhance the fight against ISIL/Daesh. As a result, a number of countries stepped up their contributions.

Background

9. In February 2015, Cabinet agreed that New Zealand make a contribution to a joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission in Taji, Iraq [Cab Min15 5/8 refers]. It was agreed that the deployment would be for a period of two years from the time of arrival (i.e. until May 2017) with a Cabinet review occurring after nine months.

10. The purpose of Task Group Taji is to provide training to the Iraqi Army in order to prepare them for operations to degrade ISIL/Daesh. Training covers a broad range of individual and organisational military skills, such as basic weapons skills. Training is also provided to the Iraqi Army so that they can assume responsibility for the delivery of the training programme. It is a non-combat mission.

11. As at February 2016, there are up to 143 New Zealand Defence Force men and women deployed to the Building Partner Capacity mission in Taji and in support roles around the Middle East region. Up to 106 of these personnel are based in Taji, fulfilling a number of roles including training, logistics support and force protection. The remaining personnel are deployed into s.6(a)

s.6(a) The second rotation of personnel arrived in Taji in November 2015. This Cabinet paper reviews the progress to date of the respective elements of this military contribution.

Comment

Review of the Building Partner Capacity Mission

12. As at February 2016, Task Group Taji has delivered a prescribed programme of instruction to over 4000 Iraqi Army personnel. In total, five coalition Building Partner Capacity sites across Iraq have trained around 19,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces¹ since November 2014. The Building Partner Capacity training programme is centred on the provision of basic skills which includes training in the laws of armed conflict, human rights, women, peace and security, basic weapons handling, combat first aid, obstacle breaching techniques and planning for combat operations.

13. s.6(a)

¹ Note that the Iraqi Security Forces includes the Iraqi Army, the Federal Police and the Counter Terrorism Service

s.6(a) [redacted] Task Group Taji has since conducted three junior leadership courses and a fourth course is scheduled to commence in March 2016. s.6(a)

[redacted] In addition, Task Group Taji has delivered a six day course to a group of Iraqi medics and train-the-trainer courses have been conducted.

The mission is delivering positive results

14. The joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission is delivering positive results. The training of over 4000 Iraqi Army personnel and the involvement of Building Partner Capacity mission trained Iraqi Army units in the recent counter-offensive to retake the city of Ramadi from ISIL/Daesh indicate that Task Group Taji is successfully fulfilling its objectives. It is estimated that around 8,000-10,000 Iraqi Army personnel will have been trained by the time New Zealand's mandate ends in May 2017.

15. s.6(a) and s.6(b)(i) [redacted]

16. There are however still challenges to overcome, which we are seeking to mitigate through ongoing engagement with the coalition. s.6(a) [redacted]

How has this performance been measured?

17. The New Zealand Defence Force is tracking the outcomes of the New Zealand deployment to Taji against a series of measures of performance on a monthly basis. The measures cover a range of areas including the ability of New Zealand Defence Force personnel to carry out their tasks; s.6(a)

[redacted] and the standards achieved by the Iraqi Army units at the conclusion of their training. A detailed account of these measures can be found in **Annex Two** .

18. In addition to constantly monitoring performance, the New Zealand Defence Force runs a continuous improvement programme. The New Zealand Defence Force s.6(a) [redacted] collect and discuss lessons identified throughout the training period. These observations are then analysed and incorporated into the pre-deployment training or developed into recommendations for consideration by the coalition.

19. While overall, as highlighted above, the measures indicate the mission is making positive progress, one of the challenges faced is gathering information against the full

range of these measures. While New Zealand can confidently demonstrate that Iraqi Army units are appropriately trained over the course of their instruction in Taji, s.6(a)

Trained units in theatre

20. s.6(b)(i)

the graduates of the coalition Building Partner Capacity missions have demonstrated significant improvements in tactical skills and professional competence.

The 'joint' Australia-New Zealand nature of the deployment continues to work well

21. New Zealand Defence Force personnel are deployed alongside up to 300 Australian Defence Force personnel. On the ground, the natural interoperability and close working relationships that exist between Australian and New Zealand personnel enables the Building Partner Capacity mission to function effectively. One of the key activities in supporting this interoperability is the combined pre-deployment mission rehearsal exercise in Australia. This has been useful in allowing the contingent to prepare together and form relationships, making the transition to Taji a more seamless process.

22. The relationship on the ground is supported by a close working relationship between the respective joint operations and strategic headquarters. The relationship includes frequent communication and where possible the sharing of resources. For example, s.6(a) New Zealand will be providing (within the original mandate Cab Min (15) 5/8) medical specialists s.6(a)

23. Our presence in Taji has benefited significantly from the scale of resources the Australian Defence Force has deployed to support its contribution there. s.6(a)

These resources provide us with a level of support we would not otherwise have access to.

24. The establishment of the New Zealand Embassy in Baghdad, co-located within the Australian Embassy, in July 2015 has further strengthened Australia-New Zealand efforts. An on the ground presence by a New Zealand Ambassador, coordinating closely with Australia on the diplomatic front, has proven valuable.

25. Australia has been forthcoming in its appreciation of working with New Zealand in Taji. s.6(a)

Review of the other aspects of the military deployment

26. Outside of the personnel deployed to Taji, New Zealand Defence Force personnel are deployed to coalition headquarters in Iraq s.6(a)

27. s.6(a)

28. In addition to the above, a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 and New Zealand Defence Force support personnel were deployed twice to the region in support of the joint Australia-New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission s.6(a). These deployments were in keeping with the Australia and New Zealand practice of pooling logistics support, as well as providing extra resource during high tempo periods such as personnel rotations and senior level visits.

Threat assessment review

29. Each location has a different threat profile and the New Zealand Defence Force conducts regular reviews of threat levels. The unmitigated operational threat to New Zealand Defence Force personnel and platforms deployed to Iraq remains HIGH.

30. Potential threats to New Zealand and other international personnel in Iraq include insider attacks, direct attacks on coalition bases, and indirect fire. s.6(a)

There could also be a risk of cultural miscalculation. In addition to force protection measures (see section below), cultural awareness training is provided as part of pre-deployment training.

Force protection

31. Comprehensive advice was provided to Ministers with Power to Act on the force protection measures taken to manage potential threats in February 2015. The New Zealand Defence Force continues to mitigate potential threats through a range of measures s.6(a)

- the physical protection of the training complex perimeter s.6(a)
- the use of force protection, including a dedicated force protection element within the New Zealand contingent;
- s.6(a)
- s.6(a)
- s.6(a)
- s.6(a)
- the use of personal protective equipment; and
- comprehensive pre-deployment and continuation training.

32. Force protection measures are under constant review to ensure they meet security requirements.

Review of the broader counter-ISIL/Daesh military campaign in Iraq

33. ISIL/Daesh has suffered a series of setbacks over recent months, losing control of 40 percent of its territory in Iraq and 20 percent in Syria². After a months long counter-offensive the Iraqi Security Forces, with coalition air support, recaptured key areas in the city of Ramadi in December 2015/January 2016. ISIL/Daesh has also lost territory in the North around Sinjar, and a Shia militia force, with support from Iran and coalition air support, recaptured Baiji in central Iraq.

34. Despite these successes, ISIL/Daesh has managed to maintain strongholds, in Raqqa in Syria and in Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. From these bases the organisation has been able to continue to support ongoing military campaigns, and administer its territories. ISIL/Daesh maintains its robust revenue-generating structure which is sufficiently flexible and diversified to compensate for declines in income from single revenue streams.

35. Furthermore, the ISIL/Daesh affiliate network continues to grow internationally, with eight established branches³ and some 34 groups around the world having pledged allegiance to the ISIL/Daesh core. Terrorist attacks in Turkey, the Sinai, Tunisia, Paris and Jakarta, shows greater reach and coordination between ISIL/Daesh and its affiliates. ISIL/Daesh has also continued to recruit foreign terrorist fighters despite an increasingly constrained environment.

36. Within the Middle East we also continue to see more extreme radicalisation of forces within Iraq and Syria and an increasingly devastating humanitarian situation which represents a destabilising pressure on surrounding countries. The migration occurring across the region and into Europe presents a major cause for concern for destination and transit countries alike.

37. New Zealand is contributing to the wider international coalition through a range of diplomatic and humanitarian means. In addition to our contribution to Task Group Taji New Zealand provides humanitarian assistance and is a member of the coalition counter financing and counter terrorism policy working groups.

The political situation in Iraq

38. The political and security environment in Iraq remains extremely challenging.
s.6(a)

39. s.6(a)

40. s.6(a)

² Note this refers to 40 percent of territory the group held at the height of its territorial expansion in August 2014.

³ These groups include: IS-Libya, IS-Sinai, Jund al-Khilafah (Algeria), IS-Khorosan, IS-Yemen, Boko Haram, IS-Caucasus, Abu Sayyaf (South East Asia), and the ISIL/Daesh "core" in Iraq and Syria.

s.6(a)

41. Further to these challenges, Iraq faces the added pressure of reconstructing and stabilising territory that has been re-taken from ISIL/Daesh. In Ramadi, around 80 percent of the city has been destroyed according to early Iraqi Government estimates.

s.6(a)

depressed global oil prices and s.6(a) Iraqi officials reportedly expect reconstruction costs for Ramadi alone to be in excess of US\$10 billion (ten times the total provincial reconstruction budget for 2016).

Counter-ISIL/Daesh efforts invigorated

42. ISIL/Daesh's strategic resilience and its demonstrated ability and intention to strike beyond its territory have led to a consequent reinvigoration of counter-ISIL/Daesh efforts by our partners and the international community generally. Following the attacks in Paris in November 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2249, calling for states to take "all necessary measures" to redouble and coordinate efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed by ISIL/Daesh and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria.

43. Immediately following this, the United States Secretary of Defense Ash Carter sent his coalition counterparts letters seeking additional contributions to the Counter-ISIL/Daesh fight. s.6(a)

44. A number of coalition partners, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark, have increased their military contributions s.6(a) Other partners have indicated they are also looking to increase their contributions. Australia, which is already the second largest military contributor after the United States, has publicly announced that it will maintain its current level of contribution.

Consultation

45. The New Zealand Treasury has been consulted on the content of this paper. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.

⁴ s.6(a)

Financial Implications

Financial position of the current Iraq Deployment

46. Cabinet approved output expenditure in relation to the deployment of \$65.250M in February 2015 [Cab Min15 5/8 refers].

47. The deployment is presently forecast to cost an estimated \$56.950M, an expected under budget result of \$8.000M.

48. The savings are primarily due to services provided at a cheaper than expected rate. The Daily Support Charge for New Zealand Defence Force personnel in Taji (originally estimated at USD \$300 per person per day) is being provided with the same level of service at \$160 USD per person per day.

49. The following table sets out the Cabinet approved output expenditure and forecast cost for the total deployment:

Deployment Total	2014/15 \$M	2015/16 \$M	2016/17 \$M	TOTAL \$M
Cabinet Approval	7.803	31.660	25.787	65.250
Actual/Forecast	7.083	27.477	22.690	57.250
Variance - underspent / (overspent)	0.720	4.183	3.097	8.000

50. As part of the March Baseline Update an in principle transfer will be sought to maintain the Cabinet mandated fiscal allocation across the multi year deployment.

Publicity

51. It is intended that a redacted copy of this paper be released following Cabinet consideration.

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Recommendations

52. We recommend that the Committee:

- a. **Note** that the joint Australia – New Zealand Building Partner Capacity mission is performing well and is achieving the objectives set out in the Cabinet decision to deploy in February 2015;
- b. **Note** that, in light of this success, New Zealand's contribution to the Building Partner Capacity mission will continue for the full mandate until May 2017;
- c. **Note** that this mission continues to provide a positive contribution towards our objectives of reducing the global threat from ISIL/Daesh in keeping with New Zealand's size and capacity;
- d. **Note** that unmitigated operational threat to New Zealand Defence Force personnel and platforms deployed to Iraq remains HIGH;
- e. **Note** that, despite some losses on the battlefield, ISIL/Daesh and its affiliate groups remain a real and significant threat to international peace and security including to New Zealand and New Zealand interests;
- f. **Note** that the Minister of Defence has received a letter from the United States Secretary of Defense Ash Carter requesting that New Zealand consider expanding its contribution to the counter-ISIL/Daesh coalition; and
- g. **Note** that the estimated cost of the Iraq deployment is within the current Cabinet approvals.

Hon Gerry Brownlee
Minister of Defence

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Hon Murray McCully
Minister of Foreign Affairs

____/____/____



IRAQ OVERVIEW

SINJAR

MOSUL

ARBIL

BAYJI

TAJI

RAMADI

BESMAYA

TURKEY

SYRIA

JORDAN

SAUDI ARABIA

KUWAIT

IRAN

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Legend

- National Capital
- Province Capital
- International Boundary
- Provincial Boundary
- Airport
- River
- Canal
- Main Road

Warning:
 This graphic is for briefing purposes only and is not intended for navigation. The boundaries represented on this map must not be considered authoritative. Names on this map do not necessarily indicate official recognition of the political status of the areas concerned.

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Annex Two: Measures of Performance A3

s.6(a)

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